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AMERICA'S FIGHT FOR PUBLIC OPINION¹

It is for me a pleasure and a real honor to be asked by this society to give the annual address. I appreciate this distinction not alone because as a member of the society and of its executive council I am deeply interested in its work, but more distinctly because it gives me an opportunity to talk to an audience interested in history about a type of service which I conceive will have a unique place in the history of the World War. It gives me an opportunity also to say to you, my friends and neighbors, that while doing a part of this national task I have been able to maintain the same standards that I have set for myself both as a member of the history department of the University of Minnesota and as a member of this society. I am pleased not the less that it gives me an opportunity also to say that I have followed your work even during the busy days in Washington and have seen with pleasure that the Minnesota Historical Society has been among the first to begin gathering the records of the war and that it is making its preparations against that day when the history of Minnesota's part in the great struggle must be written.

The thing that has most engaged men's attention and impressed their imaginations in this world-wide conflict has been the massing of armies and the accumulation of war material to an extent hitherto unknown. Their minds have been appalled as they have seen this conflict going on in the air, on the earth, and under the seas, with new instruments and new agencies, military and naval. Most of us, as we have sought to measure the reason for the triumph of the Allies and America, have counted upon these resources and have pointed out that victory came when they far exceeded in quantity those which Germany was able to mobilize or amass. But that does not tell the

¹ An address given at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, January 20, 1919. Mr. Ford spoke informally. The address as printed is based upon a stenographic report of his remarks.

whole story. Behind the men and the guns, behind the great armies and navies, behind the great munition storehouses and munition factories, there has been waging another and equally important battle. It has been the battle for men's opinions and for the conquest of their convictions. This battle fought in the second lines behind the trenches, in the homes, and in the shops, has been as significant and as important as the bloody engagements which have filled the columns of the press. The thing which was at stake was to make the people in the democratic nations grasp in some way the meaning of this war for them, for they were the base and the support from which proceeded the most essential things which the soldier and the sailor must have; and by these essentials I mean not only the arms to fight with but the conviction that their cause was a just and a righteous one. The thing that had to be built up was the morale of the fighting nations. To do this new instrumentalities, comparable in their way to the new types of armament, were brought into play—the printing press, the platform, the public schools, the advertising columns, the poster, the moving picture, the telegraph, the cable, and the wireless. All these had to be mobilized, directed, and inspired, so that the common man, the hope and support of self-government, felt clearly that the battle line of democracy ran straight from the fields of Flanders to every home and forge and farm. In America this mobilization and inspiration of public opinion, this fight to create and sustain morale and to arouse a patriotism that could be translated into action, whether such action expressed itself in buying bonds or in saving food or in sending our sons directly to the front, was the work of the Committee on Public Information. The committee did not accomplish its task alone, for no agency ever had directly or indirectly the unselfish coöperation of more men or women than did this much misunderstood organization.

In previous wars the United States had seen no similar organization. In the dark days of the Revolution Thomas Paine was a one-man, private committee on public informa-

tion. His *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* were the Red, White, and Blue pamphlets of Washington's day. During the Civil War the education of public opinion was more often the work of private societies. Frequently it was most effectively accomplished by songs, by the spoken word, and by the messages of President Lincoln. If one looked for educational work of an organized kind in the way of pamphlets and publications one could find it only in the private efforts of two patriotic societies, the one with its headquarters in Boston and the other in New York. The same thing might with truth be said of practically every one of the other belligerent countries with the exception of Germany. Here for a generation, through schools and universities, through the press and the pulpit, through organizations interested in colonial expansion, in the building of a greater German navy, and in the increase and equipment of the standing army, both the German government and the great industries which profited by war and imperialism had carried on a concerted program which brought a once idealistic nation to a thorough devotion to the purposes of Prussia and Prussian conquest. For England, France, and Italy the task of informing their people and sustaining their morale was a problem almost as novel as it was for us; each country in its own way worked out a method of solving the problem, at the same time combating the efficient German propaganda being carried on within its borders. For France the task was easier than for any of the other countries, a condition which is easily explained. A Frenchman needed no one to tell him what he was fighting for. He had lived his whole life under the shadow of the German menace; and now the enemy was on the soil of France, her villages were being destroyed, her homes ravaged, her people enslaved, and her industries crushed, by means that no other nation had ever permitted itself even in the name of war. Nevertheless, the French publicists and the French government presented to their people and to the world in privately printed volumes as well as in the official Yellow Book some of the best material on

the background and essential interests of the struggle. Moreover, France had as no other country the benefit of a nationally centralized school system by which the word of the government, whether it were the last official communiqué from the soldiers fighting at the front or the call for new financial support, could be transmitted to every distant village and hamlet through the agency of the schoolmaster. The great mass of the English people, on the other hand, were astounded by the outbreak of the war. To them the issues were less clear and less certain. The first official appeals to public opinion related almost entirely to recruiting, for England was upon the volunteer basis. The history of early English governmental propaganda, aside from the Blue Book, can be followed in the posters with their varying appeals which changed from time to time as an attempt was made to strike a new and responsive chord that would stir every Englishman to take his place in the ranks. Later there was inaugurated a series of publications issued not as a government agency but by the direction of the organization at Wellington House under the chairmanship of Sir Gilbert Parker and, later, of Professor W. Macneile Dixon. The work of this organization was most intelligent and effective, although a great deal of its printed material was prepared primarily for distribution in the neutral countries, chiefly America, where the need of making English purposes clear was felt to be urgent. Many of you undoubtedly profited in the early years of the war by the steady flow of pamphlets and books which came from this source, for the committee had a mailing list of between fifty and sixty thousand names of individuals who were most likely to be active in the formation of public opinion.

When America entered the war she faced, so far as public opinion and lack of organization was concerned, a situation more comparable to that of England than to that of France. We were a nation which for more than two and a half years had been subjected to the opposing lines of argument presented by the Allies upon the one side and even more vigorously and

effectively by the Central Powers through the German propaganda upon the other. Our press and our people could be divided up to the final days into three groups. On the one hand, there was a group, small at the beginning but growing in numbers, very actively favoring the Entente, and supported silently by the disfavor which Germany had drawn upon herself by her conduct in Belgium and northern France. On the other hand, there were the skillful, well-directed pro-German groups, who were financed either by the German embassy in Washington or by the contributions of misguided German-Americans in this country, and who in their activities stopped at no means that would attain their end. Between these two groups stood the great mass of the American people, into whose minds there came only gradually a perception that America was no longer a land of isolation and of freedom from political interest in Europe; that it was not possible for America to remain neutral in this great struggle which had been carried to her very shores, nay into her very homes and workshops, demoralizing her political life and threatening the safety of her workingmen and her industries. When war was declared, it was vital that all mists should be swept away, all doubts resolved, and all purposes united. Fortunately America had on the very threshold of the war an instrument possessed by few of the other countries. It was President Wilson's war message, which, in its elevation of thought, its clarity of purpose, its ringing appeal to the best in American life, gave to us that sense of America's entrance into a great struggle as if it were a crusade in behalf of all the things which she held dear for herself and which she cherished as a common heritage, to be passed on not only to her own children but to all freedom-loving lands.

One week after the declaration of war the president appointed the Committee on Public Information, and I think that as time goes on and as the history of this committee's work is written and its accomplishments are better understood, the executive order of April 14 will be seen as one of the most

perspicacious things that was done in preparation for the struggle. The creation of this committee was largely Mr. Wilson's own conception; and throughout its history it was only through his unfailing support in the way of interest and advice and necessary funds that it was able to carry out the work which had been undertaken. Formally the committee was composed of the secretaries of state, of war, and of the navy, with Mr. George Creel as civilian chairman. The group named can not be said to have functioned as a committee, although there was individual coöperation between Mr. Creel and the departments, and in important things it was reasonably close and effective. More and more as other duties pressed upon the secretaries, Mr. Creel had to assume complete leadership and responsibility, reporting directly to the president.

No other war agency in Washington, be it committee, commission, or board, ever labored under such initial disadvantages and such persistent misunderstanding as did the Committee on Public Information. This was due in large part to the fact that the great public, both through the press and the discussions in Congress, had had firmly implanted in its mind the idea that the organization was a censorship, which in some mysterious way controlled or was to control the press, the cable, and all other means of communication and publicity. This misapprehension was due in large degree to the fact that practically on the morrow of the committee's appointment there was introduced into Congress an amendment to the espionage bill establishing a censorship of the press, thereby bringing newspaper men under the provisions of the same law which had for its object the punishment of traitors and disloyalists. Against this amended bill there was an exceedingly vigorous and finally victorious fight. Unfortunately for the committee, however, it was taken for granted that if the bill passed we were to be its executors; naturally, also, the opponents of the bill found that they could make their arguments more pointed if they could denounce the idea of censorship as embodied in some definite individual. Mr. Creel was there-

fore labeled day in and day out as Censor Creel. When the bill was killed, as it ought to have been killed, there was no one who rejoiced more than Mr. Creel and the men who were to work under him. Neither he nor any of those who had joined his staff approved the bill either in spirit or in form. Personally Mr. Creel was the last man to desire to exercise such a censorship. From the beginning the functions of the Committee on Public Information, as he conceived them, were wholly constructive: to find and to give the truth to the people of this nation; to furnish or to urge the executive departments to furnish all the information that could possibly be given out, consistent with safety, about the movements of troops and ships, war preparations, battles, and naval engagements, with the hope that publishers would have no excuse for filling the columns of their papers with wild rumors or material which would benefit our enemies. This early, unfortunate distortion of the purpose of the committee followed it throughout its activities. Months after we were at work on wholly informational and educational things we would receive letters from authors asking us to censor books or articles before they were given to the press. During the summer of 1918 a considerable number of these communications were received within a few weeks, and I was extremely puzzled to know how this stream of inquiries had started. The question was solved when a colleague of mine, who was teaching that summer in Ann Arbor, sent me a clipping from a Detroit paper, containing a statement copied from a Chicago paper, which in turn had taken it from some obscure sheet in Indiana, that the Committee on Public Information desired to censor every book or article written about the army or navy or the prosecution of the war. I do not know what was in the mind of the Indiana journalist, but I know perfectly well that the Chicago and Detroit papers which reprinted the item knew absolutely that it was false at the time they reproduced it. I may add that of all these inquirers the one who was most insistent on having his

book censored was a writer who had a new religious cult to advocate.

You may be interested in knowing that the only censorship placed upon the American press was an entirely voluntary one: newspapers were asked to coöperate with the war-making departments in keeping essential information away from the enemy powers. The departments of state, of war, and of the navy formulated their requests, and after they were reduced, through Mr. Creel's efforts, to simpler form, allowing greater freedom of information, they were printed and circulated by the committee as an appeal of the departments concerned to the honor of the newspaper men to observe these suggestions of the government. Even these mild admonitions, then, did not originate with the committee but with the departments; we only acted as agents in circulating them. To the credit of the American press it may be added that with a few exceptions these requests were loyally observed. It was usually only by inadvertence that any newspaper in America published information about the movements of troops or ships. Curiously enough it was quite as frequently the social editor who sinned as it was the reporter. The social editor who announced that a wedding of a certain captain was being solemnized because his regiment (name and number given) was sailing at such a time forgot the existence of the line which divides weddings from war. Likewise, the country editor who, like everybody else in the small community, was down at the station to see the boys off and who saw no harm in reporting what everybody knew forgot that a spy could send information to the border for transmission much more easily in published form than by means of the telegraph or the mails.

To avoid a possible misunderstanding it should be mentioned that later in the war a committee on censorship was established to supervise outgoing mails and cables. Its personnel, as defined by congressional enactment, included representatives of the war, the navy, and the post-office departments and of the war trade board and the chairman of the Committee on Public

Information. Any activities of Mr. Creel in this capacity, however, were *ex officio* and were entirely unconnected with his main tasks.

When I turn to describe the work of the committee, there arise in my mind two scenes; and between these two scenes, if they are properly understood, lies the history of the development of the Committee on Public Information. The first was on the occasion of my arrival in Washington in the first month of the war. I found Mr. Creel with a handful of associates struggling to bring order out of chaos and housed, without equipment of desks or typewriters, in one of the old residences which had not been occupied since the days of Andrew Jackson. The house was being overhauled; painters and paperhangers and carpenters were everywhere; and the few habitable rooms were crowded with newspaper men seeking to find out what their status would be if the censorship law passed. Mr. Creel himself was so beset by these and other visitors who were seeking to present their ideas or plans for winning the war that he could hardly turn to the consideration of his chief interest. The second scene was about one year later. I was in Mr. Creel's office and the telephone rang. It was a long distance call from Mr. Rogers, who was in charge of the wireless and cable office of the committee in New York City. I heard of course only Mr. Creel's end of the conversation. It ran something like this: "Is that you, Rogers?" "Are they relaying our material from Paris to Marion in Madrid?" "Is communication open with Cairo yet?" "What do you hear from Murray in Mexico City?" "Is our material being sent down the west coast of South America?" "Have you any later material from Bullard in Russia?" In the few short months that had elapsed between the first scene and this conversation the Committee on Public Information had expanded to a world-wide organization, with its representatives and its service encircling the globe.

It seems essential that I recall to you at this point that the fight for public opinion had to be made not only in the United

States but abroad in every neutral country and even in those countries which were associated with us in the war. This was a tremendous task; and it was in the accomplishment of this task that the committee performed a service about which the public is least informed. When we closed our office last month in Washington we had representatives in Archangel, and offices in Christiana, in Stockholm, and in London. Our largest office was in Paris, our next representative was in Berne. At the head of our mission in Rome, with a staff of forty or fifty men, was Captain Charles E. Merriam, better known as Professor Merriam of the University of Chicago, twice republican candidate for mayor of that city, who did a most intelligent and effective piece of educational work in presenting America and her purposes to the Italian people. The next large office was in Madrid, from which center, by the aid of moving pictures and press work, we sought to combat the German propaganda, which was more highly organized in Spain than in any other of the European countries. Some thousands of German citizens traveling either for pleasure or on business had been marooned there, and each one apparently had found and made a connection with the German embassy in Madrid. The whole country was covered effectively by a network of German spies and propagandists. Our next center was across the Atlantic Ocean in Mexico City, where the difficulties of course were no less than in Spain, for to a higher degree than any other Spanish-American country was Mexico distrustful of its great northern neighbor. When our films were first shown in moving-picture houses, you may be sure that "Pershing's Crusaders" created no great enthusiasm, for Pershing was not a name to conjure with south of the Rio Grande. Quite the contrary; and these earlier Mexican audiences booed and hissed and tore up the benches to show their disapproval. Towards the end of the war, when our great preparations and real adherence to a disinterested policy were proved, our representatives reported that there were faint cheers when the American flag was flashed upon the screen.

We had four centers in South America, two on the east coast at Rio de Janeiro and at Buenos Aires, and two on the west coast. I can not refrain from adding at this point that if we had not been able to put forward the president's words in regard to Mexico and, more important still, his consistent policy as a proof we should never have had a hearing from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn. If America had followed the imperialistic policy urged by the Hearst newspapers and by the *Chicago Tribune* we should not only have entered the war a divided and discredited nation hopelessly frittering away our forces, but we should for all time have written off the books of our friendship and good will every Spanish-American nation.

Crossing the Pacific, we were in touch with our representatives in Harbin and Vladivostok, and these in turn with our representatives four thousand miles inland in Siberia. These men were the group which had originally started in at Petrograd and Moscow. Behind these far-flung outposts there was an efficient cable and wireless service carrying more material than the Associated Press; a weekly press service of material for distribution to the newspapers in the different countries; and an insistent flow of pictures, posters, and pamphlets, and hundreds of thousands of feet of educational film concerning America and American life and American war preparations.

Certain features of this foreign work represented unusual difficulties. One has already been alluded to, namely, that we had to face everywhere an extremely active and efficient German propaganda, which had thousands of dollars to our one and which had been in the field for some three years. Furthermore, these representatives of the Central Powers were utterly unscrupulous in buying and bribing newspapers and speakers and journalists. To combat them we adopted the simple rule of telling the truth. Over and over again I have heard Mr. Creel say to men leaving for the foreign field, "Find out what the Germans are doing and then don't do it." Our method was slower but it was more certain in the end, and wherever it has been followed I am sure it has left an under-

standing of America which will be to the benefit of our nation long after the war. Another difficulty was the fact that America was practically unknown among the great mass of people whom we desired to reach. Any of you who have traveled abroad can easily understand how mistaken their slight knowledge of America may be when it is recalled that they have had to depend upon the newspapers for their information. All of us who have lived abroad have been amazed to find that the news items about America which appeared in the foreign press were concerned with cowboy escapades in the West or lynchings in the South or the absurd divorce proceedings of some millionaire's sons or daughters. We were the land of dollar-hunting Yankees, of great trusts and monopolies. Our democracy was a myth; our real rulers were the corporations. To this misunderstanding of America we had been carelessly indifferent in days of peace. We had said with fine scorn that we did not care what foreign peoples thought of us; but suddenly we were faced during the war with a critical situation in which it was vital for them to believe in the reality and efficiency of American democratic government. What our representatives abroad found as soon as we entered the war was that the German propagandists in Italy and in the neutral countries immediately substituted the name of America for Great Britain. We were a great selfish power, which had stayed out of the war until we thought that our bonds and obligations were in danger, but which, now that Europe was exhausted, was coming in to dictate the terms of peace and to enslave the Allies in bondage to us in order to collect from them the debts which they owed us. We, instead of Great Britain, were now pictured as the power which was to dominate the world and crush the commerce and industries of all the war-exhausted nations. "Why continue longer," asked the German propagandist, "a war which in the end will profit only America?" To meet such a situation one needed to begin almost from the bottom to inculcate and foster a lively and convincing sense of America's unselfish purpose, of the es-

sential service of her government to the great masses of the people through schools, books, libraries, museums, forest reserves, roads, public health, and sanitation; in short, to show them that in America there was a real government not only by the people but for them, and that in this land democracy worked and the citizen obtained value received for the support which he gave in taxes. You will now understand, I think, the type of material which we put into our films and into our press service and into our cable and wireless messages.

It was a picture of the true America, not perfect nor claiming perfection, but the one which Europe must see if she were to coöperate loyally with us in the fight to "make the world safe for democracy." Furthermore, it was of course essential to carry to our associates in the war some idea of the wholeheartedness with which the nation had gone into the war and of the extent to which all other interests had been subordinated to one tremendous effort to equip and drill and dispatch an efficient army of fighting men.

In Russia, which at the time we entered the war had just thrown off the bonds of despotism, our whole effort was to be helpful. From the Kerensky government our representatives received a warm welcome because it needed our assistance in teaching its own citizens what self-government means and what democracy does for a people. To the great mass of the Russians government meant only oppression, not helpfulness and coöperation. The Russian press also was in general uninformed about actualities in America. One editor of a prominent paper in Moscow argued with one of our group about our imperialistic aims because we had annexed Cuba. Besides the use of the films, to which I have already alluded, and of pamphlets and posters, there was distributed to the press of Russia a weekly newsletter containing instructive items about American life and institutions. Several hundred newspapers received this material and used a considerable part of it in their columns. Conditions were entirely changed, however, when the Bolsheviki came into power in November, 1917.

Many of the most ardent among their supporters had returned from America, where they had lived chiefly in the slums of New York; for them America meant only an enlarged East Side. In some cases they have enjoyed advantages in America; as one instance I recall that a Bolshevist leader in Siberia revealed himself as the holder of a master's degree from a large eastern college. In the case of others, the distorted and inaccurate idea of America which they carried back was not wholly their fault. They had come to us with high ideals and great hopes, and no effort had been made on our part to Americanize them or to save them from sinking into sweatshop conditions in which no self-respecting person could acquire a sense of loyalty. Too often in America we have forgotten that we can not expect either our native citizens or the foreign-born element to feel like Americans unless we make it possible for them to live like Americans. One of the committee's chief difficulties under the Bolsheviki régime was due to the suppression of the newspapers which did not support the new government. To this degree our newsletter service was rendered ineffective. In the meantime, however, thousands of private citizens in Russia had asked to be put on our mailing list. From these readers and their friends there came daily to the Moscow office of the committee hundreds of letters asking about American life and institutions; at least one third of the writers were seeking information about American educational institutions. When our able representatives, Messrs. Arthur Bullard and Edgar Sisson and their associates, found it necessary to withdraw from Moscow and Petrograd, they maintained their helpful activities in Siberia. As a result of the many inquiries about educational matters they sent a cable call for an educational expert who might be of assistance in the reorganization of the public schools in Siberia. Last summer I was able to induce Dean William Russell of the University of Iowa to go out to Vladivostok. His story of his conferences and lectures on education and the American school system is one which would hold the attention of an interested

audience for a whole evening. He penetrated four thousand miles into Siberia, as far as Omsk; everywhere people listened to him eagerly, and he found the local officials anxious to discuss their problems of reorganization. When he left, the city school system of Vladivostok had been reorganized with a city superintendent, a school board, and, the unheard-of thing, a special school tax. I can not refrain from mentioning this one result of Dean Russell's work in passing simply because it illustrates what I feel was the intelligent and helpful approach the committee made not only in its work in Russia but elsewhere.

At the head of our New York office, sending out material to the foreign representatives of the committee, was Ernest Poole, the novelist. He and his associates and the writers who helped them may safely file in the archives every "story" they sent out and know that the future student of America's part in the war will have nothing to conceal or condone.

Quite as effective as our attempt to carry America to neutral countries was the plan to bring their representative editors to see America, where they might learn at first hand of its war preparations and its real war purposes. It was the Committee on Public Information that brought to Washington and sent through the country a group of Mexican editors. This mission gave President Wilson an opportunity to say directly to the makers of thought in Mexico what was at the heart of America's attitude toward Mexico and thus to brush away the misunderstandings that had arisen from the imperialistic preachings of certain powerful and selfish newspapers. Nothing that has been done in the relations with Mexico contributed more toward clarifying the situation than this journey of the Mexican editors. The result was shown in the columns of their papers when they returned to their native land. Similar groups of editors were brought from Switzerland and from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and we may rest assured that as a result of this intelligent effort to make America known

we are better understood in all these countries not only now but for all future time.

Perhaps I have dwelt overlong on the foreign aspects of the committee's work. I have done so largely because it is that part of our service about which the least has been said, and because it represents, it seems to me, a new and an intelligent effort to make the peoples of the world understand each other; an effort which ought to be continued if we are to have community of thought and freedom from misunderstanding in a world which realizes that it has more in common than it has in conflict.

The domestic work, that is, the educational work carried on within the United States, was organized in some twenty or more divisions, under the direct supervision of Mr. Creel in Washington. I can not of course undertake to give at such length a survey of the activities of all these divisions.

The earliest division established was the news division, which, through its representatives in the various war-making divisions and departments, sought to obtain and make available everything that was vital concerning America's participation and preparation. It was hoped that through this division we could secure more information than the military or naval mind is usually willing to divulge and that we might also save the time of hard-pressed government officials who could not be interviewed by fifty or seventy different reporters. The work of this division was always difficult and delicate. It stood between the newspaper press, which clamored for utter revelation, and the military organization, which was inherently hostile to publicity. On the whole the results were commendable. The committee secured and made available thousands of releases; only three were ever questioned as to accuracy, and in only one case was the division shown to be in error and that was largely because it had accepted at its face value the statement of a war-making division which had confused legitimate publicity with press-agent work. It would be a misunderstanding of course if any one were to think that newspaper

men in Washington were limited to the information contained in the releases that were mimeographed and laid out on a table in our press room. These they could use and put on the telegraph wires if they chose. If they sought more information, they could go to our representatives in the various departments and ask further questions. If the person questioned could not answer, he always took the reporter to the responsible naval or military man, who would give or withhold the desired information upon his own responsibility. Every effort of this division, as of the whole committee, was to open and not clog the avenues of information.

Through another division the committee published the daily *Official Bulletin*, which had no elements of a newspaper but was intended as an official chronicle of governmental actions and decisions and a repository of executive orders and departmental decrees. The complete texts of these documents were essential for the direction of all war-making agencies and were of importance to all people doing business with the government upon a war basis. The daily *Bulletin* was distributed gratis to government officials, post offices, and libraries; and it was sent to over seven thousand business houses and individuals who were willing to pay the prohibitive subscription of five dollars a year in order to have the files of the only official government organ. Every other government has had such an official gazette for years; France has published one for the last hundred years, and even Siam issues an official bulletin. With the conclusion of the committee's work the United States will again be without such an official repository of information concerning the government's action, and, unless a newspaper happens to carry the text, there will be no place except by direct inquiry at Washington where the citizen can find out the latest administrative regulations concerning business and demobilization.

Perhaps the most novel and best known division of the committee was that concerned with the organization of the Four-Minute Men, and I may add that for the purposes for which

it was conceived it was one of our most effective agencies. I recall that when late in May, 1917, Mr. Donald M. Ryerson of Chicago came down to Washington with the idea, which he had already applied in some of the Chicago moving-picture theaters, of turning loose a large number of men to talk in the name of the government on behalf of the committee, it seemed exceedingly venturesome. Mr. Creel, however, saw the possibilities of the suggestion and was characteristically ready to make the venture. Mr. Ryerson, Mr. William McCormick Blair also of Chicago, and Mr. William H. Ingersoll of the Ingersoll Watch Company, successively, took charge of this work. At the end of the war there were somewhere between thirty-five and fifty thousand men who were entitled to wear the bronze button of the Four-Minute Men. I can testify as one who saw the work both in Washington and in the field that no more unselfish service was performed than that of the ministers, lawyers, judges, and of the men, also, who had no previous training in public speaking, who labored in season and out of season to help the government put over its various programs. Exceedingly intelligent work was done by this division in the Washington office in the preparation of the bulletins and budget of material and the sample speeches which were placed in the hands of every four-minute man. By this device unity was given to the nation-wide work and real facts were conveyed to audiences literally of millions. The moving-picture men played their part in giving free entry to the representatives of the committee and in turn they were protected from solicitation of the same privileges by other types of interests and organizations.

Less spectacular but equally effective within a more limited field was the speaking division. There was no idea of carrying on at government expense a formal campaign of public addresses. The chief need was to create coöperation and prevent competition on the part of many agencies. The speaking division not only accomplished these objects but it supplemented private and state and local effort by sending through-

out the country distinguished men in Washington and foreigners who came to us from Italy, France, and England. I am glad to be able to say that of all the speakers sent out by the committee under its own direction there was none so effective as the Reverend Paul Perigord of St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul. At the opening of the war he gave up his studies and, not being able to secure a chaplaincy in the French army, he entered the ranks and fought in the French army from the Marne to Verdun, attaining the grade of first lieutenant. With all this wonderful experience behind him, this soldier-priest, with his perfect command of English, his clear grasp of the issues at stake, and his high and idealistic treatment of all he presented, made an appeal that could not be equaled by any other speaker on our platform. I have seen him talk to tens of thousands in audiences such as that in the auditorium at Denver or with even more gripping effect to ten thousand miners at Butte in the open air. At the close of that last meeting a committee of the miners came to him, and said, "Perhaps you think we did not cheer enough, but we are with you, heart and soul, and we could not cheer because our throats were full." Let us hope it will be the good fortune of St. Paul and of the Northwest that Lieutenant Perigord will find again his home among us and aid us as a civilian to realize the high ideals of America and maintain the appreciation of France to which we have been stirred by his words as a warrior.

I can only allude in passing to the satisfaction I feel as I recall what was done in the score of divisions which directed the committee's work. The advertising division secured something like three million dollars' worth of free advertising for the government and prepared the advertisements. This service was really performed by the advertising men of the country and the committee's modest part was to organize them and put them in a way to do that work for which they were eminently fitted. The pictorial art division in its preparation of posters lifted the government out of the hands of private firms who were furnishing drawings and plates of inferior quality. Men

like Charles Dana Gibson, Joseph Pennell, and others gave without return services which no money could have bought.

Our largest commercial venture was the film division, which, with the aid of the signal corps of the army, prepared and distributed through the moving-picture industry, patriotic and educational films on the government's war preparations and war needs. The committee's films, such as "Pershing's Crusaders," "America's Answer," and "Under Four Flags," were shown in thousands of moving-picture houses in this country and abroad. The film division also managed the great war exposition which visualized war and its implements and realities to a quarter of a million in San Francisco, as many more in Los Angeles, and to over two million on the lake front in Chicago. As the division was put upon a business basis, it was enabled to turn back to the government treasury hundreds of thousands of dollars. This money was then available for the non-profitable distribution in this country and abroad of those films which were essential in exemplifying the spirit and character of America's daily life as a democracy.

In its domestic work the committee faced at once, as did every agency of the government, the question of arousing to activity and self-expression the patriotic groups of men among the foreign-born. It was our humble service to have made possible for these thoroughly appreciative Americans who had gained a love for our institutions and who were fired with a desire to do their part in protecting them, an opportunity to become effective agents both in supporting the national cause and in forwarding the work of Americanization. Something like a dozen different foreign language groups, aided by the committee, formed their own organizations, had their own supporters, and their own contact with the foreign language press. The government was therefore able to reach with patriotic messages whole sections of the population which had not as yet the ability to read the English language.

To each one of these divisions and to others that I have not mentioned, such as the service bureau in Washington, the di-

vision of women's work, and the distribution division, could easily be given space equal to what I have given any of the preceding divisions.

In conclusion I should like to speak especially of the division of civic and educational publications with which I was most intimately connected and for which I was the responsible director. I do this not solely because of my own connection with the division but because in its work so much was contributed by men who are known to you as members of the faculty of the University of Minnesota. Through this division there were published some thirty-five pamphlets with a total distribution of over thirty-five million copies. In the case of some single pamphlets the circulation ran as high as six million copies. Many of these publications were translated into foreign languages, both for readers in this country and for use abroad. Our first venture was with the annotation of the president's war message, an idea excellently carried out by Professors William S. Davis, William Anderson, and Cephas D. Allin. It was a venture, and our first printing was only twenty thousand copies. No sooner had the newspapers given publicity to the pamphlet than we were overwhelmed with requests for this and like material. They came from men who were going into the officers' training camps, from their parents at home, from colleges and schools, and from the homes both of the humble and of the well-to-do. The demand for it immediately revealed a whole field of work. The succeeding publications were divided into three series: the *Red, White, and Blue Series*, the *War Information Series*, and the *Loyalty Leaflets*. Possibly the most effective of the *Red, White, and Blue Series* was the *President's Flag Day Address*, which was annotated by Professors Wallace Notestein, Elmer E. Stoll, August C. Krey, and William Anderson, and which received a circulation of over five million. Of all the pamphlets published by the committee, or by any government agency for that matter, throughout the war, the most far-reaching in its effect was the one entitled *Conquest and Kulture: Aims of the Germans in*

Their Own Words (Red, White, and Blue Series, no. 4). Never in the history of the relations of one government to another has such a terrific indictment been put forth under governmental sanction. Through the scholarship and skill of Professors Notestein and Stoll, the German aims and plans were revealed in a way beyond dispute or cavil. *Conquest and Kultur* had a circulation well over one million copies and was published and republished in part in the newspapers throughout the length of the land. Our experience with this as with the other pamphlets clearly showed that the man in the street wanted serious, thoughtful, truthful presentation, and that when he had it he would read it and believe it. It showed also that the common man was doing as much and possibly more thinking about this war than the man who sat behind a glass-covered desk and directed large affairs. Professor Krey was a contributor to *German War Practices* (Red, White, and Blue Series, nos. 6 and 8), and Professor Willis M. West was one of the joint editors of *German Plots and Intrigues* (Red, White, and Blue Series, no. 10). Professor David Swenson aided in the preparation of Swedish translations of some of these pamphlets and to Professor J. M. Thomas I am indebted for calling to my attention the address by Stuart P. Sherman of the University of Illinois, which was published as *American and Allied Ideals* (War Information Series, no. 12). The poems by Dr. Richard Burton of the University of Minnesota and by William C. Edgar, editor of *The Bellman*, are among the most inspiring in our anthology, *The Battle Line of Democracy* (Red, White, and Blue Series, no. 3). Scores of university men all over the country were contributors to other pamphlets and to the *War Cyclopedia* (Red, White, and Blue Series, no. 7), of which the first edition was exhausted and the second practically ready for the press when I closed my work in Washington. To all the contributors I said very simply and directly that I wanted the pamphlets to be as accurate as scholarship could make them; that I wanted them to be the kind of work which they would not be ashamed to own twenty

years after the war. If you will examine those pamphlets you will find that they follow two lines: first, to present the aims and purposes of America, to make it clear both why America was fighting and what America stood for in the whole struggle; second, to make clear to our own people and to all neutrals the aims and ideals and methods of the enemy we were fighting. We drew chiefly from two lines of evidence that were indisputable: from the words and deeds of the Germans themselves, and from the testimony of our own citizens who had observed or studied them either here or abroad. In the last year of the war we felt so distinctly the necessity of reaching the whole people regularly through some single agency that we turned to the public schools and founded a bi-weekly magazine called *National School Service*, which was sent free of charge to every one of the six hundred thousand public school teachers of the United States. It carried into every school and home the message of every war-making agency and of every national agency which was helpful in any way to win the war—Liberty Loan, War Savings, Red Cross, School Garden, and Food Administration appeals. For the first time in the history of America the voice of the national government was carried directly and regularly into the schools of the whole country. All this material was presented by expert educators in a form adapted for immediate use in every type of school. So valuable was this periodical considered that after the committee ceased its work President Wilson set aside money sufficient to ensure its continued publication under the department of the interior with the same staff which I brought together for its direction. I may be permitted here to pay my tribute to the public school teachers of this country. No group more loyally responded to the call from Washington than did the underpaid and overworked school people of the nation, and their effort was no small part in the unanimity of national feeling.

You may be interested to know that all this work was carried on during the first year at a total cost of a little over

\$1,600,000, and that the appropriation for the domestic work given by Congress for the second year was only \$1,250,000; that is, we had about one two-hundredth of one per cent of the total war expenditures in order to tell the people what it was all about. I submit that that was not an excessive sum, and that to carry on all the activities which the committee directed on such limited support was a real achievement. It was made possible only because so many gave their aid either without salary or at a compensation less than they had received in civilian life. In this self-forgetting service and sacrifice no one set a higher example than did the chairman. Had Mr. Creel been the "safe and sane" type that certain groups clamored for the committee would have died of inanition. It was far better to have his fighting spirit and leadership, even if it kept us on the front page. That was better than having the committee and its work in the obituary column. Willful misstatement and misinterpretation have had a very long day and a very large public; but Mr. Creel, like the committee with which his name is associated, can safely await the longer perspective and the day of dispassionate understanding for a juster apportionment of praise and blame.

I can not conclude these remarks without an expression of appreciation for the tremendous force and drive which was put behind the war efforts of the nation by its unanimity of spirit. If, in the creation of that unanimity of spirit, that better understanding of our purposes and achievements both in war and peace, the Committee on Public Information contributed any small part, I am well satisfied and well paid with the privilege of having been associated with it. We were, let me repeat, only one of the agencies through which this unanimity was accomplished, but the total result was an America which was invincible, unconquerable, and triumphant.

GUY STANTON FORD

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MINNEAPOLIS